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CEREBUS MELMOTH ELEVEN

D I N
C A F

150
SEP

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Dear Dave,

I have always regarded yourself and Gerhard as being amongst the more subtly humorous American comic practitioners. I take it your recent Editorial wasn't serious, as the letter allegedly by me was obviously bogus? You have the right to hold any opinion you want, of course. That is obviously understood. As for Lord Horror — I regard these comics as being a hundred times more pernicious than Faust. A printed apology would not, in the circumstances, be untoward.

All best —

Mike Moorcock

There is certainly nothing in the world more embarrassing than a situation like this one. I do profusely apologize to Mike Moorcock for the obvious embarrassment a circumstance like this must cause. I apologize for any injury to his professional standing as well as apologizing for impugning his personal integrity.

I will never under any circumstances print another piece of correspondence alleged to have been sent by a member of the professional community without confirming that the item in question did indeed come from them.

Had I reacted as my initial instincts directed me; to shrug philosophically, pitch the venomous thing in the garbage, remove Mr. Moorcock from the freebie list and quietly mourn the loss of a fondly-remembered acquaintance and a respected colleague.

Well. Some things are better left unsaid.

★★★★★★★★

Monique's been gone for almost two full working weeks now. Gerhard and I have been running the business side in addition to doing the words and pictures. It's been an experience, let me tell you. Frankly, there is not enough work to warrant having a full-time person in the office. Monique spent a great deal of time reading books, waiting for the phone to ring. There is probably too much work to handle in addition to writing and drawing, but we're going to try it for a month or so. After that we can figure out what we can get a part-time or piece-work employee to do. As all of the independent companies try to get through these hellish times, they would do well to consider doing more of their own work themselves. I was talking with someone recently who mentioned a new alternative publisher who runs his company out of a one room apartment, doing all of the business side and taking very little money, most of which goes to the artists and writers. What was wrong with that, he wanted to know. I said, there's nothing wrong with that. I've been advocating for years that comic book publishing should be an average paying job; publishers should answer their own phones, keep their own books and keep their costs to an absolute minimum. Someone else then asked, but what if through the publisher's efforts, the company becomes more successful; his titles sell better and he gets more and better titles; shouldn't he be able to improve his standard of living? Get a nicer apartment, or an office separate from his apartment? So long as he is still taking the same *percentage* of revenues and improving his standard of living, I could see nothing wrong. What bothers me are the small quality companies publishing a handful of really good comics who, during boomtimes, expand their standard of living, both as individuals and as companies. When hard times (like these) come along, instead of scaling back that standard of living they choose instead to publish pornography or moronic adaptations of bad movies, gradually shuffling their quality titles into the background.

A glut of lousy comics is a glut of lousy comics no matter *who* publishes them. If you produce and/or publish quality material, your circulation will expand for a while, then contract for a while (I speak from nearly fourteen years experience). If you try to expand endlessly, like an accountant's wet-dream you will end up just as repulsive and vulgar as Marvel and DC.

In my opinion, anyway.

★★★★★★★★

Before I forget, I wanted to remind all of you that Now & Then Books (90 Queen St. S. in Kitchener), Canada's oldest surviving comic book store will be celebrating its twentieth (!) anniversary on October 19th of this year. Harry is inviting everyone to come and join in the celebration. I'll be there most of the afternoon and I've even promised not to make snotty comments about all the damn gum cards. Circle the date on your calendar and I hope we'll see you there.

CEREBUS

NO. 150 SEPTEMBER 1991

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MELMOTH
a short story

•
(Cerebus 139 to
Cerebus 150)

CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED
MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-
VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX
1674 STN. C KITCHENER
ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2
ALL CONTENTS © 1990 DAVE
SIM. PRINTED IN CANADA BY
PRENEY PRINT & LITHO
INC., WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

EPilogue

I KNOW
IT'S SIMPLE
ENOUGH...

I JUST HAVE
THIS FEELING
THAT IF I
TALK TO
THEM

IF I CAN
SHOW THEM
WHERE THEY
WENT WRONG

OR...

NO!

SMX

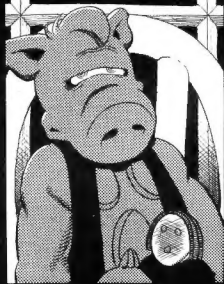
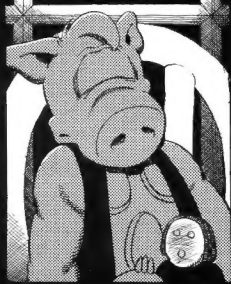
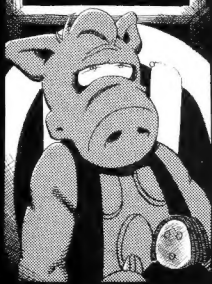
IT'S NOT
YOUR JOB
...
PURE AND
SIMPLE

WE'RE
PRISON
GUARDS

NOT
PRISON
CONFESSORS

I KNOW,
BUT I...

ABSOLUTE QUIET
IS WHAT THEY
NEED- STEW
IN THEIR OWN
JUICES



GIVE A PRISONER
AN INCH AND
THEY'LL TAKE
A BLOODY
MILE

EVERY
TIME

BUT...
MAYBE
IF WE

LIKE LORD
JULIUS' BRAT
-- JANNA -- OR
WHATEVER HER
NAME WAS

WHEN THEY
BROUGHT
HER IN.

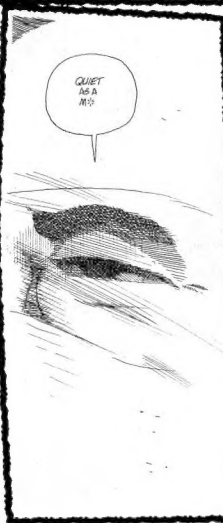
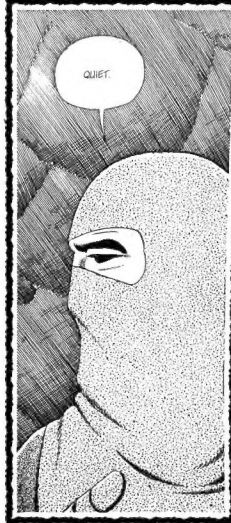
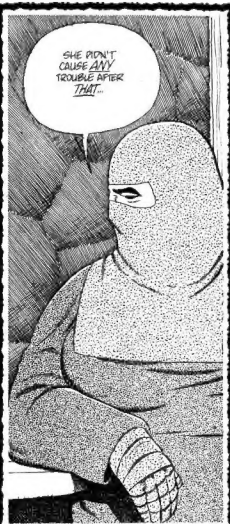
BLAMED FOR
EXECUTION
WITHIN
THE WEEK.

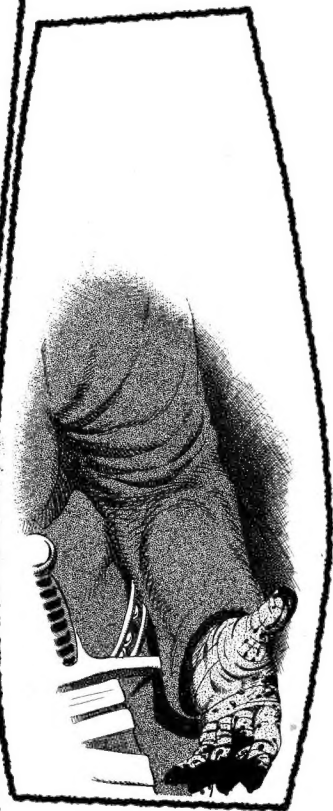
BOO-HOO
HOOWING
ALL OVER
THE PLACE

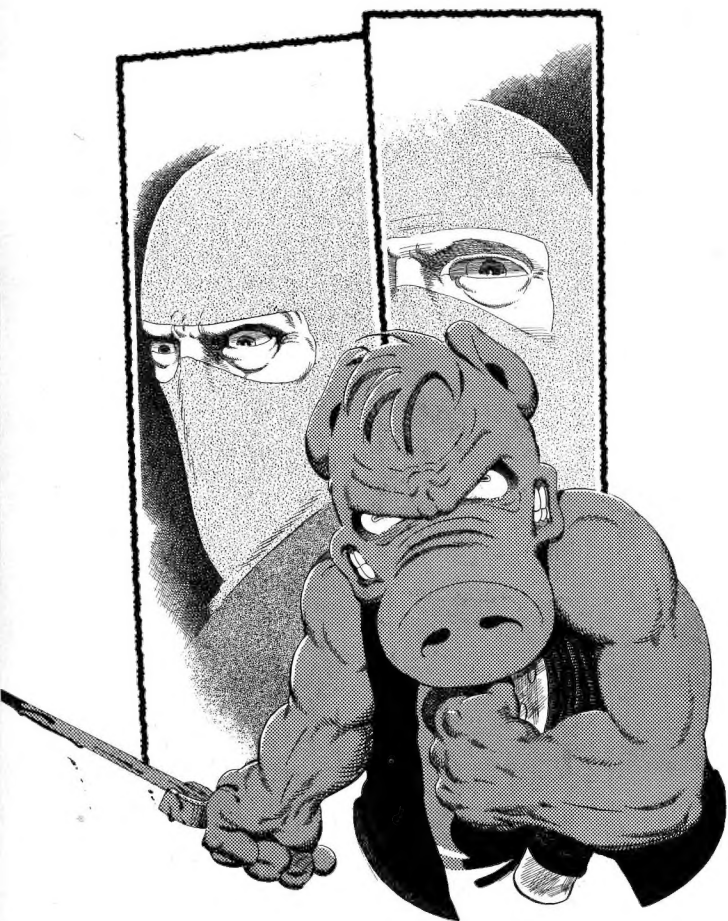
DISTURBING
THE OTHER
PRISONERS

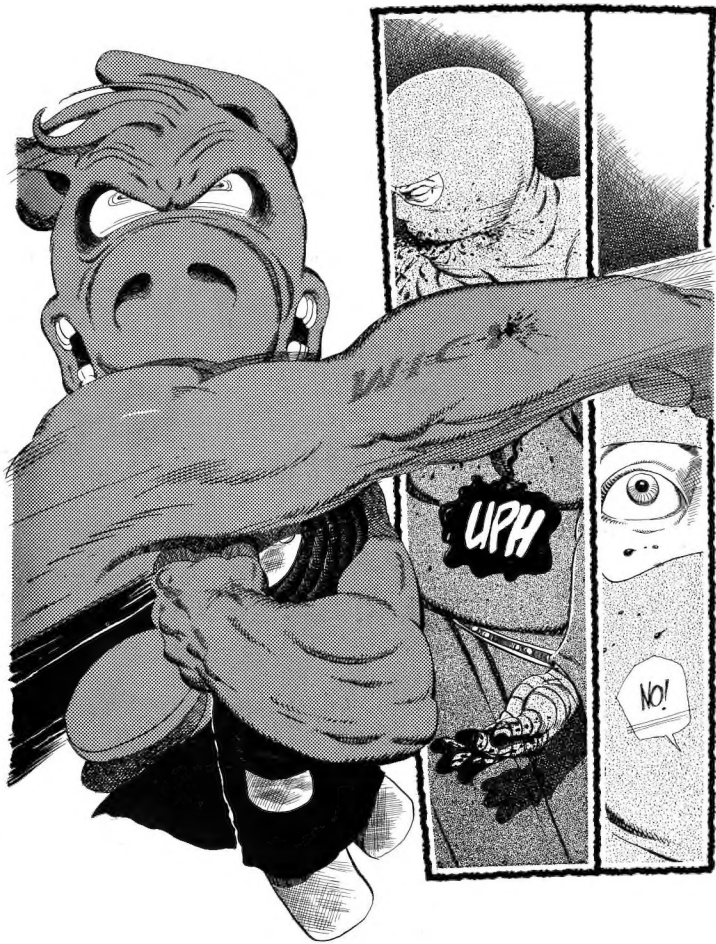
SETTING
A BAD
EXAMPLE

FIRST TIME
I JUST DENTED
HER LITTLE
SKULL FOR HER



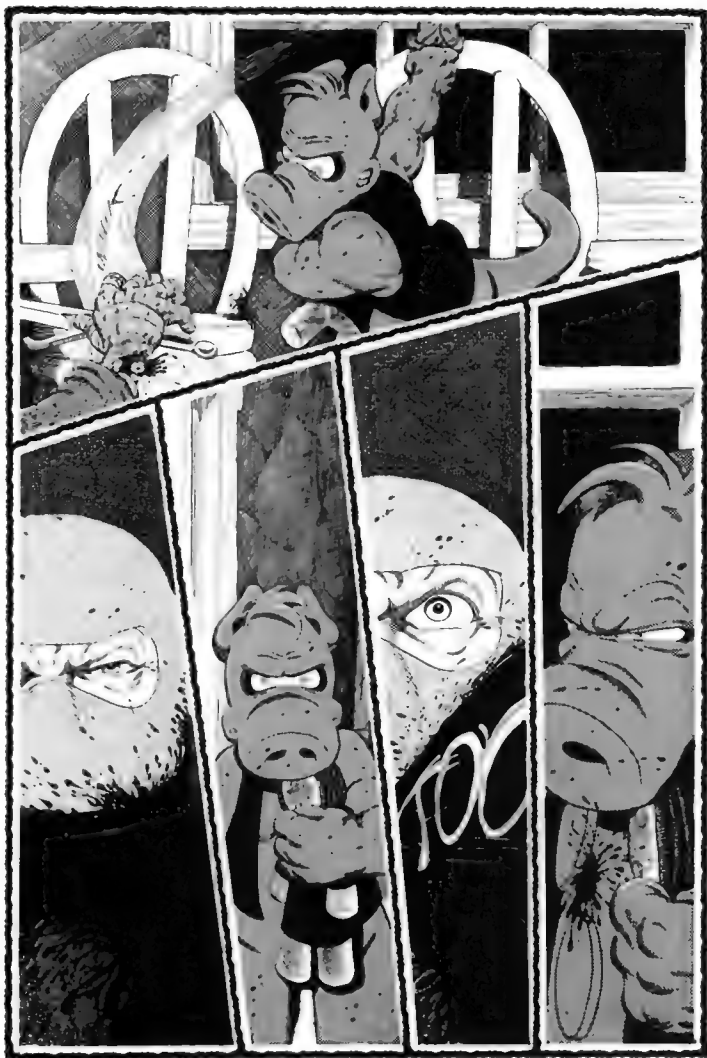


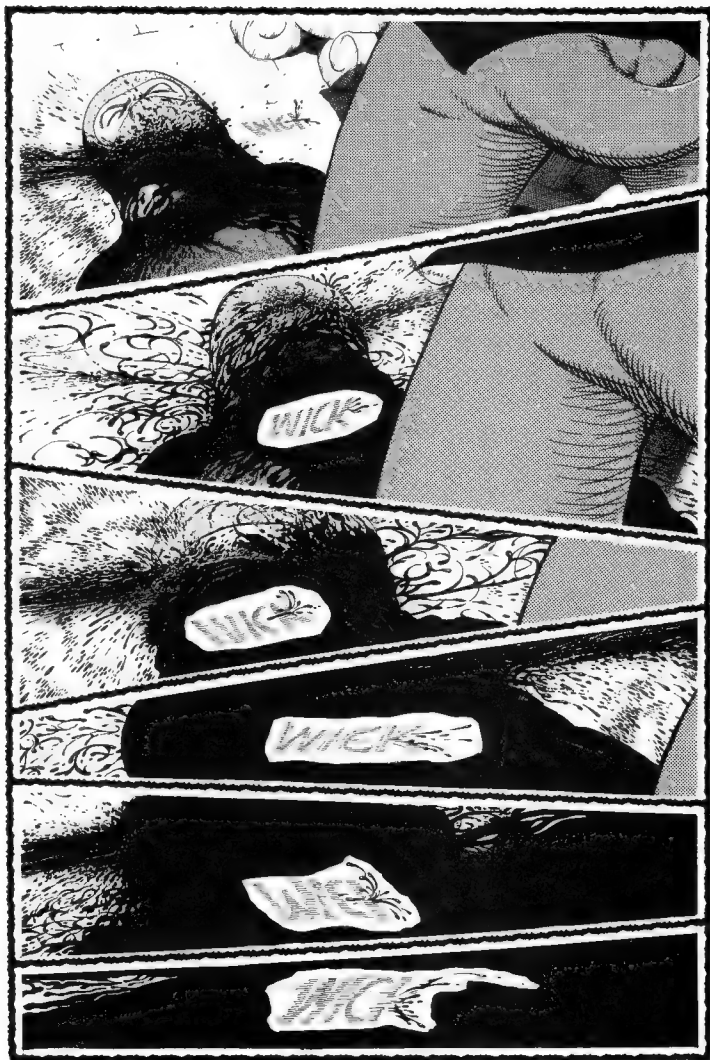










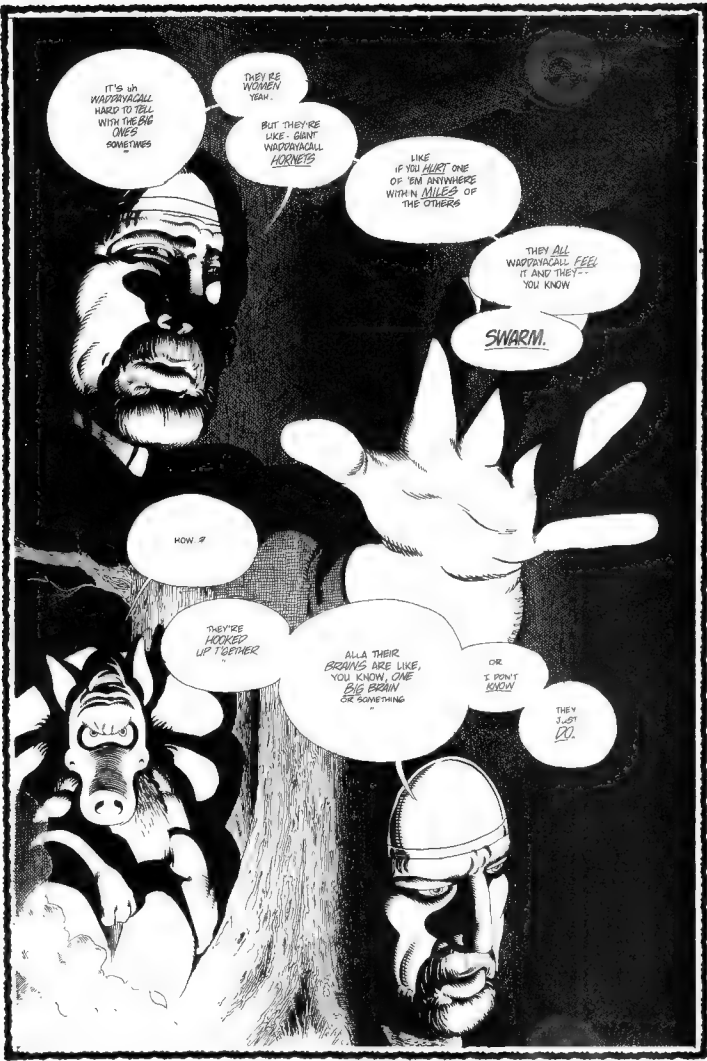




THE "oh
WAPPAYACALLIT
CIRINISTE
I GUESS

THE
CIRINISTE?

THEY'RE
WOMEN..
AREN'T THEY?



IT'S uh
WADRYACALL
HARD TO TELL
WITH THE BIG
ONES
SOMETIMES

THEY'RE
WOMEN
YEAH.

BUT THEY'RE
LIKE - GIANT
WADRYACALL
HORNETS

LIKE
IF YOU HURT ONE
OF 'EM ANYWHERE
WITHIN MILES OF
THE OTHERS

THEY ALL
WADRYACALL FEEL
IT AND THEY--
YOU KNOW

SWARM.

HOW ?

THEY'RE
HOOKED
UP TOGETHER

ALLA THEIR
BRAINS ARE LIKE,
YOU KNOW, ONE
BIG BRAIN
OR SOMETHING

OR
I DON'T
KNOW

THEY
JUST
DO.



ONCE-

ONCE, WHEN I
WAS POSTED IN A
WADDYACALL BORDER
TOWN N LOWER FELVA

ONE OF
OUR GUYS DECKED
ONE OF 'EM. WE
THOUGHT IT WAS JUST
ANOTHER GUY
I GUESS

ANYWAYS, SHE GOT
A BROKEN JAW -- OR
HER COLLAR BONE OR
-- I FORGET

BUT EVERY
CIRINIST IN THAT
TOWN WADDYACALL
CLOSED IN ON THE
TAVERN WE WERE
IN..

HE
RAN.

HE WAS A
WADDYACALL
REAL GOOD
RUNNER

THEY DIDN'T
EVEN CATCH HIM
Y'KNOW? THEY
LIKE

RAN
WITH
HIM



LIKE
A PACK
OF DOGS
WITH A STAG
Y'KNOW?

CUT 'IM
UP REAL
BAD

NOT HIS
LEGS

NO VITAL
ORGANS.

THEY WANTED
HIM TO
WADDYACALL
KEEP

Y'KNOW?

I
NEVER HEARD
NOTHIN' SCREAM
LIKE THAT.

NOTHIN'!

AN' THAT WAS ALL
YOU COULD HEAR...
IN THE WHOLE
TOWN!

ALL
NIGHT

WE
FOUND
'IM NEXT
MORNING

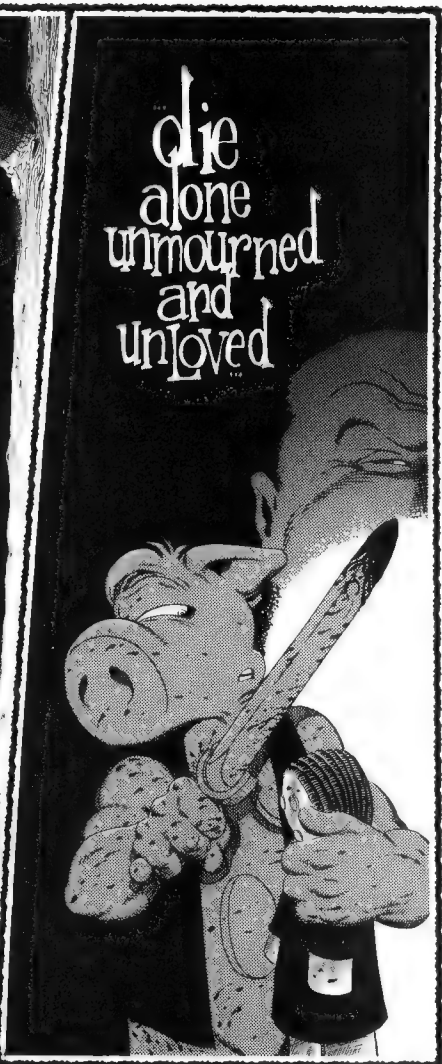
NOT A
SCRATCH
ON HIS
HEAD
NOT A
SCRATCH
ON HIS
LEGS.

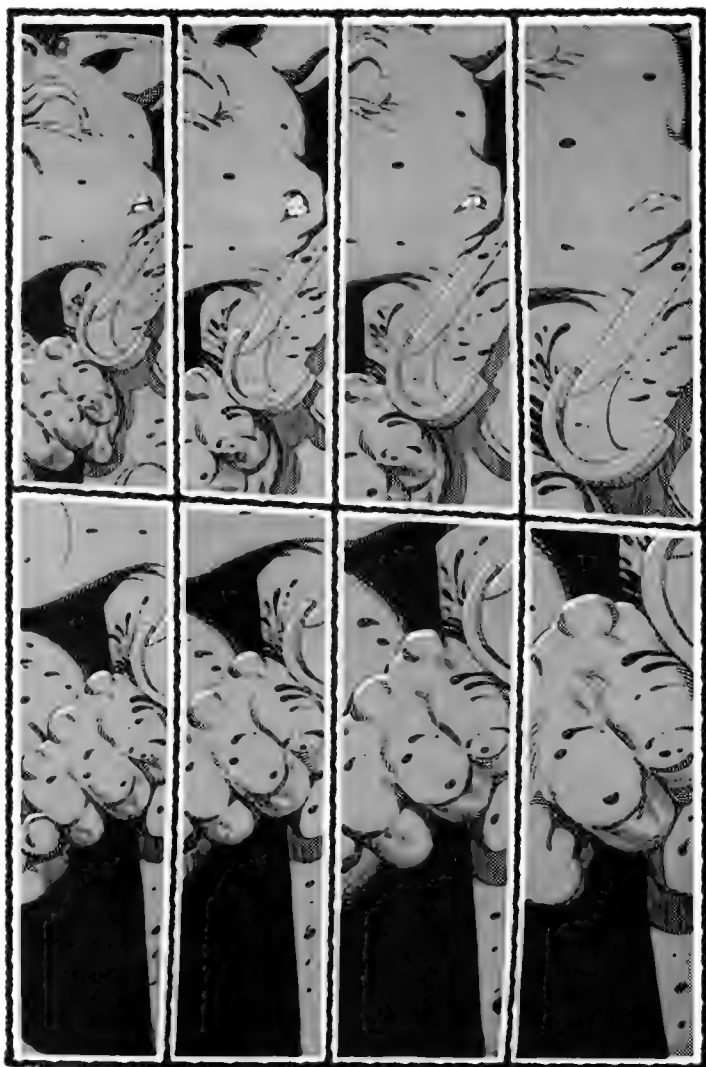
IF I EVER
WADDYACALL
'DID' A
CIRKIST...

BY ACCIDENT
OR WHATEVER

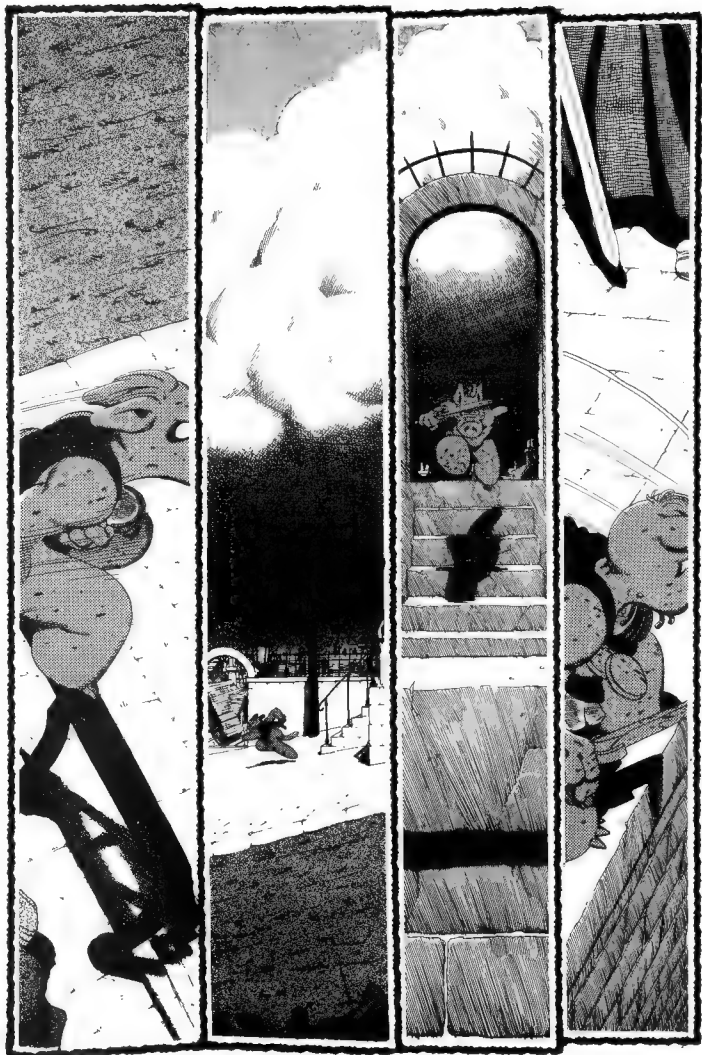
RIGHT
AFTERWARDS

RIGHT
AFTERWARDS











AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Concluding the "Ben Samuels poetry series";

The Casual Meaning of Deep Opinions

A blonde with brown-dyed hair said to me: "I think international borders are bound to fall." I said: "I think international borders fall to bind." She walked off and I walked out.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Has anybody else noticed that in the 60s Stan Lee looked like a grown-up Peter Parker, but the older he gets the more he looks like J. Jonah Jameson?

Cryptically yours,

Steve Bolhafner
3420 Missouri
St. Louis, MO
USA 63118

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Well, I certainly didn't want my first letter to you to be completely unrelated to the fine comic at hand. However, the letter from M'Oak raised points that I feel compelled to respond to. I can only hope that my letter will prove to be unnecessary, as I feel my points will be so basic and obvious that you will be buried under a deluge of letters making the same arguments. However, I cannot take the chance that those who agree with me will assume that others will express the same feelings. Thus, I must write.

M'Oak claims that rape is not evil, that it is a natural male action, and, apparently, it is an action guided by love and/or lust. All of these claims are blatantly false, and one need go no further than his own letter to disprove them.

Can M'Oak name any other simple, natural action which has such a stigma against it? There are sex taboos, of course, but there is no rational soul who would consider banning or criminalizing the mere act of sex. Sex is as natural as sleeping, or speaking. Rape, however, is

not. Rape is only natural in that violence is, unfortunately, a natural part of human nature. And rape is merely an act of violence.

M'Oak puts forth the view that his considered rape of Deborah was an expression of his 'love' for her. However, he felt his love all through the summer, and while he may have been excited by her, he had not considered raping her. He considered having sex with her, which is quite natural, unlike rape.

No, he did not consider the possibility of rape until it became clear to him that she did not reciprocate his feelings. At that point, the possibility of them having a loving, caring, physical relationship vanished, and he certainly must have realized this.

So what was he feeling when he saw that she only wanted the guy at the waterfront, when he saw that she only considered him, at best, a friend? Was he feeling love, affection, or even desire or lust? No. He was angry. He was developing a hatred of her. He did not want to express emotions of caring towards her. He only wanted to penetrate her body, without caring about how she would feel, without even caring how he would feel. All he wanted was the release, the mere action, the power.

Rape is not a sexual thing. He got as much, if not more, sexual thrill masturbating in the outhouse. Had he raped her, all his emotions would have been focused on the action of taking her, of fucking her rather than making love to her. All he would have wanted would have been to ejaculate inside of her, with her becoming nothing more than a vessel, rather than a person.

That is what rape is, and that is why it is not natural, and that is why it is evil. It is the ultimate act of removing the humanity from another person, reducing them to an object, while reducing yourself at the same time. It is the absolute destruction of a natural, beautiful act. It destroys the concept of the sex act for both participants, and it does it for all time.

Unfortunately, it seems M'Oak is already ruined. If he can still consider rape to be natural and related to nothing but sex,

then that is how he will consider sex from now on. He will find nothing wrong with using women as receptacles for his semen. No purpose, no pleasure, just release. As far as he will be concerned that is what sex is. One of the finest expressions of caring, one of the best sources of pleasure, turned into nothing more than an act to be performed for his own release. Not even satisfaction, as he will ultimately find no pleasure in dehumanizing himself and another person.

And that is why rape is evil.

Andrew S. Koenig
1015 Old Post Road
Mamaroneck, NY
USA 10543

P.S. No, I am not a feminist. In fact, I am one of the few remaining who call ourselves, proudly in fact, secular humanists. I do not support radical or extreme behaviour of any sort. It never succeeds, and always seems to get in the way of participant AND spectator sports.

★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave,

Well, survived San Diego in one piece (Barely). Honestly, I can see why you didn't feel the urge to attend. If I wasn't being a junior comic whore (I hopefully will never be in the financial situation that I have to be a senior comic whore . . .) trying to sell *City*, and a couple of other projects, I probably wouldn't have attended the con, just gone to the after-hours parties. Your fear that the party situation would be bleak proved almost true, so Derek and I took matters into our own hands and formed our own at my hotel.

The shindig was determined at the end of the Con to be the most lively of any gathering that weekend. In attendance were Neil Gaiman, Kate Worley & Reed Waller, Tom Orzechowski (sp?), Bill Loebs, Derek, Mike Dringenberg, and many others. Highlights were certain members of the opposite sex trading items of clothing in front of everyone, and a mass effort to get at least one of the windows open in the very overcrowded room.

OK, enough of the 'society that was high' column bit. Other than that, San Diego was pretty bleak. Having fan-geeks see your pro tag and ask if you work on "Wolveream" (First this bub!) or the Punisher got old real quick. Both Kate and Heidi MacDonald made the comment that they were glad they got to be friends with me now, because in two years I'll be completely intolerable. (If they would have met me two years ago, they would realize that I'm actually mellowing with age . . .) Let's see, what else . . . oh yeah, try this: OK, so Derek came up with the theory that I'm the

next in line, heir to the throne of Strawberry Jam, next perpetual bug in your soup type-of-thing. OK, so his theory leads that if he's your bastard child, (along with Mike Bannon, et al ...) then that makes me the bastard Grandchild ... I don't know about you Dave, but even in a drunken haze, that kinda scared me. I mean, but for a (lucky) twist of fate, I could have been your ex-nephew, now this ... (Sorry if all this seems in poor taste. Lack of sleep will do this to you.)

News other than San Diego; The "If you read, or are involved in any way with *Cerebus*, curse" strikes yet again. Within a week of you notifying me that the single page would run in the regular book, Randy and his girlfriend of five years split up, and a week later my relationship of four years went the same route. Randy says thank you, I don't know how I feel about it yet ...

In other Randy-related news, he's thinking about getting a *Cerebus* tattoo when I get my new one, and has the dilemma of wanting to know; does he have to tat' c Dave Sim along with it? Enquiring minds want to know ...

Regarding this whole feminist thing that's taken up so much space lately, let me just say this. Men are men, women are women and each should be treated fairly and with equal respect. (Or is that being simplistic ...)

I'm really looking forward to the new book starting in 151, *Cerebus* is one of those things that I'll always , no matter how tight my budget, find the money for.

If I haven't said it before now, thanks Dave.

In closing: RE " ... consider me an 'asshole' as do the creators of all avant garde comics ..."

I was talking with Scott McCloud on the subject of closed ended stories, as opposed to ongoing books, and the problem of burnout therein, (something Scott is having first-hand experience with right now) and the fact that you've consistently put out a great comic for almost 150 issues, and plan to go to #300. Both Scott and I agreed that this is an insane task, one that neither of us would willingly set up for ourselves. But Scott made the comment that your doing it was very important, like the first man to climb Everest solo. It is something that needs to be done just to prove it can be done, and that more importantly, *you're* doing it. Scott said that no one else *could* do it, because you're the only one of us determined enough, or stubborn enough to see it through.

Now, I don't know if Scott thinks you're an asshole or not, but after talking to him about this, one thing is obvious Dave, he has a great deal of respect for you. And me, I'd rather have someone

respect me for my "vision" and think I'm an asshole, than have them think I'm the nicest guy in comics and think the art I produce is "OK". I dunno, maybe I'm wrong, but I think it all goes to where your priorities lie.

Well, I'd better get back to work. I've got a story in *Real Stuff* #4, and an 'adult' one-shot called *Favors* coming out by September. The 24-hour comic *will* be done sometime in the next two weeks, it just became impossible to do it and get all the *City of Angels* material together for San Diego. What else, oh, I contributed to a mini-comic. I'll send you a copy when the "printer" sends the color xerox inserts up from California. I'm also doing a mini-series with Derek, and a one-shot with Heidi MacDonald. Keepin' busy.

Take care,

Rantz A. Hoseley
1136 Washington Street
Clarkston, WA
USA 99403

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.
R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.
R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.
R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.
R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.R.E.M.

Just had to get that out of the way.

I started reading *Cerebus* at the beginning of Jaka's Story. It seemed like the logical place to start; boy was I wrong. I have since been collecting every back issue and reprint to learn all that has happened with the story thus far. Melmoth is another story altogether (nice one, huh?). Its timing and dialogue are excellent, thank you for publishing such a refreshing story currently out among the drek ('reads') that the 'myopic' readership seems to devour like the sweet-flavoured garbage it is.

But this is not the real reason I choose to write to you. I really wanted to respond to M'Oaks' letter in Melmoth number seven. I wanted to tell him and your concerned (read: those that actually give a shit about other peoples stories and concerns. I hope letters like this raise the hackles on the necks of people like Chris Ramono; if you don't like them please skip to my pen name at letters end: KOHOTEK. Yes that is an R.E.M. reference.) readers and you about my experience with rape. It's an almost shocking tale and I hope all of you at least try to understand me when you're reading it and finished with it.

It all begins at Western Kentucky University; not really but it seems a good place to start anyway, that's where the rape took place. Anyway, I was a second semester freshman and was pretty

miserable. Last semester I nearly failed, much to my parents chagrin. Back I went to erase that tragic flaw, and I was going to have the help of my friends down there. By some circumstances unknown to myself those 'friends' abandoned me. I lost hope and turned to drinking.

So for three weeks I subjected myself to the worst alcoholic stupor I could muster. I was a sight. I was told by people who knew me during that period (persons I would never have associated with much more than a 'hey' in a hallway) would ask me after I 'dried myself out' that the 'girl you were with that one night was hot; did you lay her?' I couldn't remember the night much less the 'hot' girl I was with. So that was three weeks of my life. Drinking, fucking and drugging. The worst was yet to come. Withdrawal is a difficult time, I was damn lucky I was only 'wet' for a few weeks, instead of a few months or even a few years. But an old 'friend' rescued me from myself.

Wait for it, wait for it. The good stuff is coming soon enough.

At the beginning of the week after the 'three' I was ready to quit. I realized the damage it was doing to me when I almost got plastered by three huge (very, very, very big) football jocks. I must have pissed them off somewhat, I can't remember what it was I must have said. I also nearly beat the shit out of some girl because she wouldn't fuck me. I also nearly tried suicide when I got totally smashed on ouzo. This shit had to end. But not easily.

I remember waking up sick one morning. I promised I would attempt to go to class no matter what. I wasn't that sick so off I went. Needless to say, I fell asleep in class. But it wasn't enough. I had a 'booze' fit. I needed satisfaction fast. I stumbled back to my room and tried to sleep it off. No good, eh. I had no money and no 'booze'. But I knew where to get it. I stole vodka from the room down the hall. And away I went into the arms of a whole gallon of Smirnoff.

It's coming, OK?

I must have passed out because it was light outside when I poured my first drink and dark when I woke up on the floor. I still needed more, I even knew where to get it and more.

I wandered a twisted path to an acquaintance of mine. She lived alone in an apartment near campus, and I even fucked her there before in her room, right in the middle of a party. She was home.

I knocked on the door and waited nervously for her to open the door. The door swung on rusty hinges slowly. She looked at me almost wantonly. I really only wanted a drink and some casual foreplay. I was really drunk and really

didn't need to get much more involved with this girl. I've nicknamed her 'the pain lady' for a very good reason. She was really into sadomasochism (please spell) in a big way. I was just into getting drunk. But in I went anyway.

I nearly fell over myself getting to the table she always kept her rum on. I mixed a rum with a shot of coke and down it went. For some reason I fell on her bed and on top of her. It must have knocked the wind out of her because I hit her with my elbow to her gut. I was praying that wouldn't turn her on. Either it did or didn't I couldn't tell. We began to peel away layers of clothing and started at it. She liked biting my tongue and she really enjoyed scratching by back with her nails as sharp as claws. This went on for a while until she demanded to be fucked on the wall. I got out of her but she wanted me to stay in and lift her and then go to it on the wall. I really didn't want to do this, I said no, but she insisted by screaming at the top of her lungs. She had a few neighbours, and I knew they'd be concerned if she screamed so I appeased her and did as she demanded. I said no. But she forced me to do what she wanted. That ladies is rape. That's my story. For those that hung on, I hope you don't consider this cool, or even interesting. Just know that it can happen. A girl can rape a guy. And it can make you feel like Grade F Shit. Not because it's unmanly. It's humanly demeaning. I was forced, and I have nobody to blame but myself.

Thank you for your attention. And if you choose to, for your ignorance of my letter.

"You are everything"

KOHOTEK

The Wild North of Kentucky, USA

P.S. Dave, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to tell my story. I've written in journals to the effect of what has happened to me but I haven't told a soul. Except for now. Please don't feel an obligation to print this in Aardvark Comment, I would really like that, but I just wanted the opportunity to tell my story. M'Oak gave me the courage to do so. Writing is a therapy. It tends to stagnate if you don't eventually tell somebody about it all.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Seeing as your Note from the President in 147 was about hatred, I'd like to bring up one thing I hate — Generalizations, especially sweeping ones. I'm British and I read some Marvel comics, yet I consider you neither to be "a boring lower class colonial" or an "asshole". Also I doubt all members of the arbitrary groups that you have picked out think of you in the ways described. In a few

short sentences you have insulted more people than those in the sentence "all drivers under 25 are maniacs and must pay through the nose for insurance" and nearly as many in "all men are pigs". Please don't insult everyone just because a couple of people don't like you.

Now having got that off my chest I'd just like to say that I agree with the rest of your note and that I'm glad to see Cerebus still has some life left in him.

TaTa

Auz
49 Lambourne Road
Chigwell Row
Essex IG7 6EZ
England

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

After quite a bit of procrastination, here it is — my contribution to your Comment pages! I've felt the urge to write before — "jump into the fray", so to speak — but as I'm a relative newcomer I didn't quite know about what was being discussed — not most of the time anyway. My first encounter with "the Short Grey One" was in a copy of *Epic Illustrated* back in high school. I later heard about him on *rec. arts. comics*, which was mentioned by Joseph Poirier in #147. After reading a long enthusiastic discussion on *Jaka's Story* I decided to take the plunge and bought the (then) - current issue, Epilogue 1 of *Jaka*, and the first phonebook from Monique. A *rec. arts. comics* reader from Norway, of all places, gave me the phone number. While I can't remember what his name was, I would like to thank him and all the *r.a.c.'ers* who seconded his recommendation through here, if you don't mind, for many hours of intelligent entertainment. Since then I've bought the *High Society* and *Jaka's Story* phone books, though I have yet to open the latter since I am also picking up the *Church and State* reprints and the ongoing storyline as they hit the shelves.

The other day I went for a job interview and the guy looked at my resume and asked me, "Scripting a graphic novel. What's a graphic novel? Is that a novel that's too explicit or that some people believe shouldn't be sold to minors or some such nonsense?" When I told him what it was, he seemed rather impressed. He then told me that he knew what they were; he was just making conversation. Ah well. But I came out of the interview thinking that perhaps the "graphic novel as an art form" idea is finally catching on. (I remember when a friend's grandmother asked me what I did with "all o'them funny books" I was buying.) Not that I got the Job though.

Before I forget, I'd like to ask how one submits a twenty-four hour comic. Can

just anyone submit one to you for consideration, or are they limited to "established" creators only? (Like I said, I'm relatively new to the book so if you've covered this before and I missed it, I apologize.) I enjoyed the Neil Gaiman one you just ran. He seems to have a thing for penses, doesn't he? First *Foreign Parts* and now this.

I also thought I'd mention that there's a column called "They really said that?!" in this newsletter called *Boing*, and in the latest issue they have a quote — written by you, Dave! — from a 1972 DC column. I won't repeat it here for fear of copyright hassles, but interested parties should check it out. Fun column, that. (And not just because of you, Dave). "Plus ça change..."

So that's it. I've managed to write you a letter without mentioning that I'm listening to Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects of Love*. Or explicitly saying anything about my social life. Or that it's almost 5 a.m. Or mentioning the big mess up north near Lake Shasta. ("A train containing weedkiller turned over a sharp turn and dumped the chemicals into rivers. Instant fishkill. And now they say that it's going to be in the tap water supply. I'm a poor college student, dammit! I can't afford to live on bottled water like I did for two days after the '89 quake! Not for any extended period of time, at least. And it turns out that the authorities haven't as yet determined possible long-term health risks to humans from the stuff. The entire situation is just totally screwed up.") Or ... hmmm, I just did.

I guess it's time to go then.

Looking forward to the next one,

Byron C. Go
2109 Shattuck Avenue
Apt. #507
Berkeley, CA
USA 94704-1220

P.S. I hope you don't mind, Dave ...

P.P.S. Hi Sandy! How's the weather in Manila? Is the volcano still acting up, or is it safe to come visit?

"Grown-ups are strange; they're not grown up at all!"

★★★★★★★★★★

A smattering of topics.

First, at the risk of not letting a dead, beaten horse lie (you still can't make him drink) — my word on feminism. Following the debate in your LOC the past few months has proven to me once again the futility of taking a shopping list of issues with varying degrees of gender, racial, political, economic, and moral significance and lumping them together under one label. Labels are tricky, often meaningless things that

tend to muck up a conversation by demanding "for" or "against" positions. I've agreed with some things people have said and disagreed with others. I still believe women are our equals in every way, I still believe violence against women and restrictions in the market place are serious problems, and I still believe that expressions of empowerment and liberation (such as Take Back the Night) are key factors in overcoming them. Other issues can be discussed on their own with a full analysis of related issues and without demanding a stance of pro- or anti-feminist. America is always more concerned with freedom than equality anyway.

What the debate seems to stem from is a reaction to feelings of anti-male women. Here, I'd like to make an analogy, so bear with me. My sister and I have been having an ongoing debate about Spike Lee specifically and black pride in general. Spike Lee's films are an embodiment of racial anger against white oppression (as well as an honest if cynical ethnographic study of the black community, but that's besides the point). Her argument is that black pride (as it's portrayed in Lee's films) uses its anger counter-productively; that the anger should be used to improve themselves and find a place in society. I argue (and of course I'm right. Aren't I always?) that the anger is a legitimate reaction to white oppression — not a productive one but a legitimate one. That is, anti-white sentiment is a symptom of a larger disease — racism. My sister's feelings, frustration and defensiveness over being asked to feel guilty for the wrongdoings of others, are equally legitimate but misdirected. She's angry at the symptom, while missing the disease entirely. Both are flip sides of the same coin, but the white anger gets less attention because it's less vocal. It can afford to be. Whites confront black anger only on odd occasions, but blacks must confront racism constantly.

What it boils down to is blaming the victim. Anti-male females are certainly as deserving of satire as any other person overly concerned with themselves, but focusing only on devout feminists is like focusing only on militant blacks. Both are reactions to larger social problems that we are all responsible for solving — racism, anti-feminism, anti-semitism, homophobia, whatever. How can we look at these problems and criticize those that suffer most, from the vantage point of those who can afford to ignore it? Personally, if I'm blamed for the crimes of others by any minority, I just ignore that individual person, secure in the knowledge that I have never directly oppressed anybody. Taking that person's misplaced anger and blaming the entire minority, or worse the entire liberation movement from which the anger stems,

just serves to separate people more. Sue me, I'm an idealist.

Another topic with a similar thrust (excuse me): a response to Sean Goldthorpe (one of many, I'm sure). I'm saddened to hear of your awful experiences as a child, but I think your anger is misdirected (am I starting to sound one note?) Kidnapping, torture, and statutory rape (or any rape for that matter) are illegal — filming them is not. In fact, given the fact that they are illegal, filming them is probably pretty stupid providing a particular glaring piece of evidence. "Ah," you say confidently, "but if these films are allowed to circulate it creates a market for them thus encouraging the repetition of these crimes." Well, not really. I think it's justified that any profit (or product) gained through illegal activity should be confiscated therefore not supporting these markets. If however, an adult person has bought one of those tapes outright it is his (or hers) to keep. Shades of 1984: "knock knock" "Ma'am, it's the police. X-rated videos have been declared illegal, and we're conducting a house to house search for naughty viewing material. Do you have any copies of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*?" Consenting adult porn movies are, as you say, quite legal. S-m sex is legal and cannot (and should not) be prosecuted; filming sex is legal and cannot be prosecuted. How then can a society justify trying to deter this activity on a market level? Isn't there a bit of hypocrisy involved here? It's kind of like declaring marijuana illegal but allowing people to sell bong and pipes.

"All pornography is anti-female and anti-child . . ." Says who? There are prosecutors in Indiana (to choose a state at random) who would call *Omaha The Cat Dancer* pornographic, and there's nothing anti-female or anti-child about it. In fact, the list of censored books and films (be they pornographic, smut-ridden, blasphemous, or whatever) is riddled with classics. *Ulysses* (a favourite of your readers I understand) was burned in four different countries between 1918 and 1923. The people quoted in "The Ranger's" letter would advocate censorship (or abolishment) of sex education as pornographic—education which might decrease the chances of repeating incidences like yours.

I'm also not sure what you mean by "the process of social control" (and I'm totally perplexed by "genocide for justice." Is that the death penalty?). Controlling what? For who's benefit? I'm in total disagreement with the Meese findings that pornography promotes promiscuity and violence against women, and there are statistics and studies which back me up. In fact, I think that violence against women supports the market for s-m porn. I've never been driven to crimes

by bad movies or magazines, have you? The lunatic fringe is just that, and no written or recorded material is going to push them over the edge. I do believe that written material has been used to promote social upheaval: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *the Communist Manifesto*, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, *Huckleberry Finn*, 1984, *Brave New World* the writings of Socrates, and the scientific work of Galileo. Any of those you would prefer the world to do without? All have been censored in one form or another in the name of "social control". You simply cannot have the good without the bad because no two people will agree on which is which. I hate the Jewish stereotypes in Fagin from Dicken's *Oliver Twist*, but I would never demand that it be taken out of a school library.

Finally, I have a personal message for Dave. *Cerebus* (the first novel, that is) was lots of fun; *High Society*: intelligent and funny, *Church and State*: blew me away; *Jaka's Story*: personal, fascinating and quite often brought a tear to my eye. Melmoth is a crushing bore. Sorry, pal. Page after silent page of Oscar dying and Cerebus ordering lunch just does not keep me up at night wondering what's coming next. Cerebus has become a "toilet read", and the only thing that keeps me buying at all are the letters pages, previews (thanks for those), and the feeble hope that *Mothers and Daughters* will return to such tired, cliched conventions as description and dialogue. Right now I feel as if you're killing time until the half way mark. You seem to be writing more for the complete stories rather than individual issues anyway, so I'm seriously considering dropping the book and buying the reprints as they are published. And neither of us want that . . . do we? (*Godfather* theme rises ominously in the background warning, "More words! More words!")

Ever your loyal fan,

Allen Rubinstein
32 Captain's Walk
Trumbull, CT
USA 06611

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

The Atomic Punk's letter in *Cerebus* #145 provided me with some insight into why it is so difficult for people to reason things out and to think for themselves. His ill-conceived rant against the people who protested Bush's Oil Massacre in the Persian Gulf partly expresses a common feeling among many Americans. He admits he doesn't know any answers or solutions to the problems in the Middle East and I think that most Americans, if they thought about it at all beyond watching the criminally-biased

coverage of the network news, felt this way, to some extent. Most Americans, though, were against the protesters by questioning their motives and criticizing the actions of a few who "interfere(d) with people who have real lives to live." (Compare this with the "170,000 Iraqi children (who) will die over the next year from disease, inadequate medical care, and other war aftershocks." This isn't from the 'liberal press' folks. This is from the *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1991, World Report section, page 5, citing a report by a 10-member Harvard University team. 170,000. How's that for interfering with people who have real lives to live?)

Speaking of motives, I spent several weeks wrestling with my own before I decided that I could not continue doing nothing. It was a despicable war, orchestrated by the Bush Administration, carefully nurtured for just the right moment. I could not in good conscience stand idly by. I read a few articles by and about others who also had doubts about their feelings and motivations concerning whether or not to protest. Some did protest. Some didn't. And I talked with a number of protesters about this very subject. It makes me wonder where the Punk got his information. I s'pose there's lots of talk about this topic in Denton, Texas.

A few thousand people participated in the war protests in Los Angeles. An estimated half-million attended the Desert Storm Victory Parade. If I were not so tragically hep, I would not know the joys of being spat at and called a traitor and a baby-killer.

Let's discuss the motives of the folks who supported the war. If the war-mongers in Washington ever, in their lives, questioned their own motives, would have come so soon? And how about the motives of those who profited from selling arms to Iraq long after Hussein's atrocities against the Kurds and his political opponents were well-publicized? (Congress tried twice to pass a bill restricting arms sales to Iraq in the 80's. Reagan vetoed it both times.)

So the Punk thinks people went to the protests because they had nothing better to do, huh? There was a great deal to do, in reality, even if the Punk, in his or her narrow way of thinking, can't see that. I wandered about, talking to people, gathering information. I was amazed and horrified by the ignorance and hatred displayed by the dozen or so war-supporters who gathered near us, trying to drown out the speakers of the peace movement with witless chants and droning propaganda. "Saddam kills babies!" they shouted as if it were some kind of meaningful mantra. Bush kills babies, too. And Saddam's been doing it for a long time, with weapons from the U.S. and our allies. And then the

Punk asks what was accomplished. Compared with the accomplishments of the U.S. Propaganda Machine, not much. But to say nothing is accomplished shows that the Punk has a narrow view of what goes on in the world.

We traded information. If I had any doubts about the hypocrisy of U.S. involvement, the protest dissolved them. More people were killed in the U.S. invasion of Panama than in the initial invasion of Kuwait. The U.S. supports and has supported many dictators. How is Hussein worse than Somoza, Marcos, Pinochet? Why are Kuwait's rights to sovereignty more valid than those of Northern Ireland, the Baltic States, Palestine and the blacks in South Africa?

The protests let it be known that support of the war was not as unanimous as the polls would lead one to believe. (Here's how those polls are conducted, by the way. A number of 'random' phone calls are made, questions are asked, and the results are tabulated. The number of calls is usually about 1000, which is less than 1% of 1% of the population of the United States.) People who are watching the television coverage know that people are protesting. The images are of flagburners or unruly, unkempt characters who somehow desecrate the flag or block traffic. (At the protest I attended, no one burnt a flag, blocked traffic, poured blood or oil on the steps or did any of the things that the government would like you to think characterizes war protests. I saw a group of four or five youths proudly waving the stars and stripes. Just because we don't agree with all the policies of the present government, doesn't mean it's not just as much our flag as theirs. For the completists, I saw one man carrying a sign that said something about getting the Zionists out of Washington. He was accompanied by a ten-year-old boy carrying a sign that said "Free Palestine". Peace movements, by their very nature, must be democratic. A government led by an ex-CIA director has no such restrictions. Keep that in mind every time George Bush says anything.) Most people who don't think very hard about these things and saw these images thought of the protesters as trouble-makers or, worse, traitors. But, there might be a few people, a small minority, who read and think a little, who have been royally screwed over by the government and know it, who might wonder if the protesters have a valid point. It doesn't take much digging or much deep thought to begin to entertain doubts. It doesn't take much more digging to turn these doubts to certainty.

Take a good, hard look at where the government is going. Bush called Jesse Helms a 'visionary'. Take a look at the judicial record of the Reagan-Bush court and its harsh treatment of the rights of

individuals. Your rights are slowly being eroded, Mr. or Mrs. Punk, and you think of ways to degrade and ridicule people who are using their remaining liberty to stand up and say, "We don't agree with U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf." Don't you have anything better to do?

Saddam Hussein is still in power. The newly re-installed Kuwaiti government, back from a luxurious exile in Cairo and Europe, is sentencing alleged Iraqi collaborators in mock trials right out of an existentialist drama. 300 American soldiers are dead, half of them killed in accidents before the ground war even began, whereas Baghdad is in ruins and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians are dead from American bombing. Who's the threat here? Who's the menace? If Hussein stays in power, and even if he doesn't, what will the majority of Arab people remember about the 1991 Gulf War in 10 years? What a wonderful rallying cry for the next Arab nationalist who comes to power in the Middle East. If we were just protecting ourselves or Kuwait, God help us if an Arab coalition builds a formidable arsenal, looks at Iraqi dead, and decides they need to protect themselves from us.

And what about the Punk? This war was awfully easy to get into and unfortunately for us, almost as easy to get out of (Of course, it's not really over yet). What will the next one be like, I wonder. If there's no opposition to these hypocritical imperialist forays, war might become far too easy for the U.S. to slide into. And the next time Bush feels he may need a few popularity points, we may slide into something a little harder to get out of. And the draft may come back. And the Punk may end up writing his or her last letter to Aardvark Comment from a Third World country that Bush thought we could we polish off over the fourth of July weekend.

Grateful for your time.

Tony Seybert
5987 Franklin Avenue
Apt. #203
Los Angeles, CA
USA 90028

★★★★★★★★★

Ger & Dave:

I was shocked and dismayed when I saw your alteration to my first letter, to wit: the word "favorite" was changed to "favourite" the way a Canadian would spell it!

I refuse to give my money to a stinking editor, so you can kiss my ass goodbye as a reader.

Also, I'm extremely upset that you reprinted issue #51—upset, in fact, that you publish reprints at all. How dare you spit in the face of white upper-middle

class readers like myself who can afford to go and buy all of the back issues with the money our parents give us? Well, the chickens are coming home to roost now, Buddy.

And don't think that I've forgiven you for that 25¢ (American) price increase as of issue #137. With the extra \$3.00 you've cost me last year, I could've bought two more Marvel comics and an Operation Desert Storm bumper sticker, so now this American consumer is gonna give you what you got coming to you.

And another thing you better answer to, by golly, is this cover date thing. Right now, I'm looking at the latest issue, which is dated May. Do you know what month it is? That's right, it's May. The latest issue of *Rolling Stone*, though says August on it. Same thing with *Playboy*. Same thing with *Vanity Fair*. So who do you think you are trying to cheat me out of three months of my life? Huh? I think I know when someone's trying to make me look like an idiot, and this might very well be one of those times, so say goodbye to my \$2.25.

Hey, wait a second—I just realized that these are *stupid reasons* to stop buying *Cerebus*. In fact, I can't think of any good reason why anyone who's ever bought *Cerebus* would stop buying it, unless that person was a stupid fucking idiot. But wait—how can anyone who reads *Cerebus* be a stupid fucking idiot? And yet there are about ten thousand people who used to buy *Cerebus* that don't any more.

Hmm, I'm going to have to think about this.

Love and wet heterosexual kisses,

John B. Velousis
925 S. Lincoln Avenue
Park Ridge, IL
USA 60068

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Hi. I hope you and Ger are doing well and enjoying the summer so far. I've been meaning to write for a long time now, but never had much to say besides "I love *Cerebus*. Keep up the great work", and I know you hear plenty of that already. Unlike some of your other letter-writers, I have nothing profound, philosophical, political or feminist to expound upon. I've been a regular reader of *Cerebus* since the very beginning, and like some of your long-time readers, can practically trace the history of my life through the issues. *Cerebus* has seen me through college, two bad marriages, a fledgling career as a comics letterer and numerous ups and downs. Hard to believe, when you think about it, but it's the only thing that has remained consistent.

I must echo Mark Perigard's comment from the lettercol of #146, about the *smell* of *Cerebus*. He's absolutely right! No other comic book smells like it, and, after all these years, in a Pavlovian sort-of-way, I've come to associate that distinctive smell with the enjoyment of reading it. It's usually funny, sometimes hilarious (though the last several issues or so have been downright depressing!), and always clever and extremely well-done. As a letterer, I can truly appreciate the way the lettering in *Cerebus* is *part* of the story and art. You manage to convey great depth, nuance and emotion, not to mention your phenomenal use of dialect. And it just keeps getting better and better!

The lettercol is quite unique in the world of comics. I don't think there's ever been its like before. Do you print EVERY letter you receive, or are these actually the cream of the crop? Nothing surprises me anymore, but, I gotta say, some of these are really bizarre.

I'm eagerly looking forward to the Neil Gaiman 24-hour story next issue. Did you like *Good Omens*? I found it quite witty and funny, especially that bit about the *Best of Queen* tapes.

Lastly, the photo of the girl on your inside-back-cover is swiped from a *Guess* ad, yes? Minus the *Cerebus* tattoo, of course. I'd been wondering who she was for awhile and then I saw her in a fashion magazine ad. Thought at first it might be your new girlfriend or something. Any comment?

I'd love to hear back from you if you have the time. Today you're at the Brant County Museum exhibit. Wish I were, too!

Take it easy,
Susan Dorne
551 Park Avenue
Windsor, CT
USA 06095

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I feel a little weird today because I am on the verge of passing a milestone in my life (and no, it's not like passing a kidney stone-hyuk hyuk). I am now finishing what should be the final set of revisions on my masters thesis, and hopefully I'll be a full-fledged, final graduate with a Masters in Administrative Science (sort of like an MBA, but without the math) by the time you read this. I've already gone through the graduation ceremony, and I just have to let the Graduate Dean read the paper and add any revisions he wants (I'm a little late, and my actual degree will say that I graduated in August rather than May, but at this point what the hell kind of difference does that make?).

Why do I feel so weird? Well, now comes the time where I have to go out and look for a job so I can enter the work force. After almost eighteen straight years of school, I am trading teachers, professors, papers, and tests for bosses, employees, and reports (it seems like only the consequences for a good or bad job change).

With this new found maturity and responsibility (hyuk), I'm wondering if it's time to get rid of my more childish possessions and fixations like comic books (excluding a select few independents such as *Cerebus*).

And, I think the answer must be . . . NAH! Besides all of the money I have invested in my comics, what else is going to keep me sane after a long day in a monkey suit, having to deal with seemingly endless problems? Besides, I hate not having everything of something I've started collecting.

Well Dave, thanks for letting me argue with myself, not that I seriously considered giving up my collection. I mean, what else would I do with all of the money I'll hopefully be earning? My only problem remains how the hell to take them all with me when I shuffle off this mortal coil. Maybe mass cremation . . .?

Before I forget and become morbid, let me use this space (if this is printed) to say thank you to the *Cerebus* readers who were kind enough to write me. I really appreciated their response, and the help they offered to provide me concerning Ellison's works and old *Cerebus* issues. And to Mark Haden Frazer—I'm sorry I didn't write back, but your letter arrived during a particularly frenzied period of thesis draft writings and revisions, and so much paper was flying around that I'm afraid your letter became a mistake victim of my waste paper basket. I just wanted to tell you I did receive your letter, though I only got to read it once before it disappeared, and the specific contents are kind of fuzzy in my mind. Thanks again though.

Whew. Long letter isn't it? I thought for a while in the beginning that this was going to be another thesis, but it looks like I've said everything that was on my mind for the moment.

As always Dave, it's been a pleasure.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Cochran
P.O. Box 139
Black Creek, WI
USA 54106

P.S. Whoops, guess I was wrong. There are a few more things I've got to say. Dave, I found a copy of your *Cerebus Animated Portfolio* the other day. Pretty funny little vignettes. Also, it's nice to see that *Cerebus* is still alive. I

was going to suggest that you have someone hold a mirror up to his nostrils! That will teach that old geezer not to ignore the former pope and earth pig born when he's being polite enough to say good morning!

P.P.S. Mike, if this sees print I'll be 4 for 4. See, that BA in English isn't as useless as you thought. So Nyah.

P.P.S.S. I almost forgot. Are there any readers out there who know where I could obtain Cerebus: 1-19, 21-26, 29-31, and 54-55, not to mention Swords of Cerebus #2? I've used up just about every possible source up here, and I'm getting desperate! Someone, please help!

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Gerhard and Monique and Linda:

Forget Nancy Reagan sleeping with Frank Sinatra! The true shocking revelation in Kitty Kelley's scandalous biography of the former first lady is that before Ron married Nancy he was originally married to Bill Wyman of the Rolling Stones.

Come on, Ron! Nobody marries the bass player!

Scandalously,

Chris Savia
175 Milltown Road
Springfield, NJ
USA 07081

P.S. Melmoth is wonderful. Rave Rave.
Thunderous applause.

★★★★★★★★

Dave, I've been here since 50, and I for one have been very pleased with the evolution of this letter column. I've been meaning to join in the fun for some time now. I was going to be oh so witty, and do my best to annoy all those Chris Romano's out there. Well since this letter doesn't concern the pages of Cerebus it will probably annoy all those readers anyway. But the wit will have to wait till my next letter which if I keep to my current schedule, should be somewhere around issue 244.

Another one of those controversial can of beans has been opened in this letter column, and I want to be one of the first to get my two cents in. This can is the one opened by "M'Oak". So if you don't mind, at this time I'd like to address the culprit directly. So here it goes.

"M'Oak."

You're going to take some heat on this one, and I'll be amongst those who are going to give it, but probably not as much as you'll be getting from the other 24,998 people who read Cerebus.

First, I wanted to say I really appreciated the intimacy and honesty of your letter, I'm sick and tired of certain issues not

getting discussed in our society because they're too touchy or because this opinion or that is simply unthinkable. We can't learn to deal with the ugly sides of our society if we don't examine and try to understand them. I'm a big fan of the splatterpunk movement in writing and film wherein one looks honestly at anything without flinching and candy coating it for the easily offended. But that's getting off the subject.

And what is the subject anyway? It's not the ugliest topic we could choose to discuss, but it makes my top ten list. It's rape. So let's get started.

You've written what I consider a dangerous letter. I'm going to try and explain why I think so. Often in your letter you say that rape is a natural instinct. What's unnatural? As Love and Rockets sing, "You cannot go against nature because that is part of nature too." I suppose one could say it's a natural urge to want to climb the nearest water tower and start popping off the local preschool kids across the street with your high powered semi-automatic rifle. It's a natural instinct, so what?

But at one point you go as far as to say that "Rape, folks, is not evil... This is a thing of questionable evil." To me the act of rape is evil. But to think of it, to be capable of it, is not.

You seem to be a basically good person as was Pud in *Jaka's Story*. I sympathize with you both. I know what it's like to have those "friendships" with women who will be your best friends and spend countless hours with you but still expect you never to have a sexual thought about them. It sucks, I've ended some otherwise great friendships because of it. I've never come as close to raping someone as you or Pud has, though I know I'm capable of it. I've had fantasies about raping women. (But, I think I'd be a lot happier with a little bondage with a willing partner.) When all was said and done neither you or Pud raped the woman. I don't think your case is an uncommon one, but I'll bet most of those cases end up the same way yours did, with the male stopping himself before actually going through with it. I'm sure occasionally rape does happen under the circumstances you described, and then it's a tragedy for all involved.

I think the vast majority of rape cases are a much uglier tale. When rape happens it's not an "unfortunate man" breaking under the terrible pressures put on him by those sensual women we all love and hate. *It's an act of aggression.* There are men who can only get an erection through the violence that goes with rape. There are cases where women, doing their best to get through these awful encounters "give in" and don't resist the assault only to find that the attacker has gone limp. Most of the

women I've been intimate with have had rape stories of their own. Some of them very brutal and always cruel. None of the stories I've heard (and I admit that it is the women's point of view I've heard it from, but after all they're the ones who get raped) could be cases of misguided love. It was always about either violence or power. Every time I hear one of these stories it makes me feel helpless and angry.

I don't think at any point in your letter that you say or even imply that you approve of rape, but you come awfully close to sounding like you're trying to justify rape.

Hell yes, analyze and understand those feelings you have. It's the guy who completely denies that he's capable of such thoughts, who's going to surprise himself one day when he finds himself trying to shove his wife down the garbage disposal, piece by piece. If you understand your dark side it will be easier to tame. Learn to recognize evil, or you may become it. Vomit out your witches.

The danger in your letter is that you seem to be offering a rationale or justification for rape. Yet you don't seem to realize that the essence of rape is violence.

I don't think we should be afraid to review any subject in public. But think it through first. Make sure you check the meaning of what you're saying. It might not be what you intended.

With respect,

Russell Lingo

Now back to you Dave,

Well that wasn't so bad, even though it was, for the most part a serious letter. I still managed to get in one sexual fantasy, plug a band, and neglected to mention Cerebus. But the real musician I'd like to plug is my man, Tom Waits, "never drive a car when you're dead."

Finally before I go I want to send a big wet sloppy kiss to Phil "the short guy" Ristaino. Right now I'm waiting for that really long super cool letter he owes me. Alright, nuff said. I'm outta here.

Russell Lingo
1088 Cragmont
Berkeley, CA
USA 94708

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I appreciate you taking the time to answer my last letter. By doing so, I feel compelled to apologize for my irresponsible missive which preceded it. The tone was horrendously defensive and bitchy, which is not something I aspire to. The tone of my last letter, to Lil' Evan and his gang, is overly cynical

and a bit insipid, but *not* defensive. If I'm going to make any headway, I'll obviously need a more reader-friendly tone.

I'm glad you know what I "*mean*," about exercising some taste and self-restraint. My biggest "argument" problem, unfortunately, is I take too much time and use too many words to get to the real point.

Basically, if speech is free and anyone can say or write whatever they want, whenever they want, I think it's necessary for individuals to limit themselves, in order to prevent a verbal free-for-all. If I want to write about my sexual escapades, I will do so only if there's a legitimate reason. "To impress Dave and other readers," is not a *real* reason. Why freely offer information which no one else is interested in? That just makes you a boring and self-indulgent person. If someone is going to responsibly exercise her or his right to free speech (or to vote, for that matter), then he or she should be adult and intelligent enough to know when *not* to.

But now I'm repeating myself. I guess I'm just preparing and refining my argument for future confrontations. I'll be sure to keep my eyes open for any more letters of opposition. So far, I've received two letters actually showing support—but in both cases I'm probably just preaching to the converted.

Thank you for your indulgences.

Benevolently,

Christopher Romano
16907 Avenida de Santa Ynez
Pacific Palisades, CA
USA 90272-2130

★★★★★★★★

I promised myself I'd never do this but ...

Dear Dave (and Ger),

I kinda hoped someone else would write in about this but ... I'm going to pretend that Oscar as Melmoth refers to Maturin's 'Melmoth the Wanderer' aka the Wandering Jew.

Q. Why would you want to identify one with the other?

A. Because you've read the book.

Melmoth is a rich, young Irish wastrel who, consumed with vanity, makes a pact with the devil in exchange for eternal life and everlasting youth/beauty. Yes, it's Oscar and 'Dorian Gray'. So with the two Oscars we have Melmoth as he starts out: young, pretty, egotistical and invulnerable; and Melmoth as he ends up: tired, ragged and looking for death and/or comfort in the strangest places.

Why should *Melmoth* be the book that closes the 'male half' of the *Cerebus* storyline? Because that is, literally, what

Melmoth is all about. It is the ultimate masculine (not exclusively male) conceit that once you're born into this world you can, in contravention of natural law, stay here, young and vital forever.

As Melmoth discovers though, you can achieve this end but all the same desire death (and eventual rebirth). You end up wanting the female to assert itself over the male and enjoy its 15 minutes in the spotlight.

If you identify Cerebus with the storyline in its entirety, I suppose what we're seeing here is the externalisation of events going on in Cerebus' mind. A little slice of his on-going ego-death, kinda like Odysseus denying his manhood. (And we did see him in drag and denying his own identity.)

All this said and done he's now free to cast off all the importance placed upon him from outside (why else NORMAL roach) and do things his way, in his direction.

Should be fun.

You'll prove me wrong now but before I go: (a) I did hope the covers to Melmoth would make one big picture instead of all this looking through portals, and (b) sorry for the scrawl.

Yours interestedly,

Dmytro Bojanowskyj
4 Medina Road
Coventry CV6 5JB
United Kingdom

P.S. Not much of a letter I know but I'm saving all my criticism/praise/analysis/ personal problems for issue #300.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

It's been a while since the last time that I have written you a letter. I finished the Ellmann bio of Wilde I was telling you about back then; this summer I want to get around to his life of James Joyce. Who might make for an interesting addition to the cast, come to think about it. I'm doing my senior thesis next year on fictional biography, novels and film. Mostly stuff like *I, Claudius* and *Raging Bull*. If citing Graves and Scorsese in the same thesis isn't weird enough, I'm also looking at Gore Vidal and Clint Eastwood. And if I can figure out the right approach to the material, I want to try to take a look at *Melmoth* while I'm at it. If you would be willing to answer any questions, let me know and I will prepare some for you. This is shaping up to be a huge paper, but I want to look at as many approaches to the biographical narrative as I can, especially the more radical ones, and I think *Melmoth* might be as radical (in its own way as a novel) as Flaubert's *Parrot*.

I also have a tiny request to ask of you. Connie and I have been writing back and

forth for a few months now, but my latest letter came back earlier this week as the post office was unable to forward it (Connie told me in her last letter she had moved to another part of New York). I was going to put an ad in the back page of the *Voice*, but it was nearly fifteen bucks and no guarantee she'd read it. On the other hand, there's a fairly good chance she'll read *Cerebus*. So could you please print this letter for me, Dave? And Connie, if you see this, drop me a line at my home address.

Thanks a lot, Dave. You know, I've been collecting comics for almost six years now and this is the only book I read then I still read now? But everybody tells you that probably. I've got to sign off; catch you later.

Sincerely,

Ron Hogan
53 Melrose St., Apt. #5H
Melrose, MA
USA 02176

★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave and Ger,

I seem to be unlucky about ringing and catching you people in.

And I'm trying to be good in this nightmare final week before heading Americawards about not ringing people up, so I thought I'd send a fax instead ...

Hope all's well.

I saw the latest *Cerebus*, and it all came flooding back with that photo on the back cover. The interview was part of a BIG article commissioned by *The Sunday Times Magazine*, over here. I interviewed you for it, Brian Bolland, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, and other people. Sent it in to them, and, about a month later, got a pained phone call from someone with a double-barrelled name, offering me a 600 kill fee for the piece. "It's just not balanced," he sighed. "Not balanced? What do you mean, not balanced?" There was a long and awkward pause, and then he said, in pained and incredulous tones, "Well, these comics. You actually seem to think that they're a GOOD THING."

I was a rotten journalist, all things considered.

(I also spent some time trying to figure out who the tiny head in the mirror belonged to. I rejected fellow interviewers Dave Dickson, Roz Kaveney, and, if memory serves, Paul Gravett, and finally decided it was the waiter turning up with the caviare, which until that afternoon I had thought was black and sort of salty; but on finishing the interview I discovered there was also the other kind, which was lumpy and green, and looked like frogspawn in snout and tasted like heaven ...)

Your notes from the president was hugely appreciated, and terribly nice. My thanks.

Now, the news: taking you up on your rash invitation, I'm coming up to Canada for a day and a half after the Dallas con. Time to sign in the *Beguling* (nice people and a really sensible store) and then head over and spend some time with you guys. Thursday the 25th of July. Carve a notch in your diaries.

Through a coincidence (Dave McKean getting rid of most of his comics in moving, and already having the collections). I wound up with most of the early Cerebi, and spent a recent evening rereading them as comics, Deni's editorials and all. You've come a long way since those days, but they're still more literate and better-told than 99.5% of what's on the shelves today. (Sad, huh?)

Back to work. See you in July. I am, as ever,

Yr. most obt svrt.

Neil Gaiman

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Hi there! I have some wonderful news to you and your readers! Are you ready for this? I KILLED ANTONY!

Actually no—but I've severed him from my life. Completely! I'm so much happier now. And I did it my way. Beat him at his own game! My deepest thanks to all for your kind advice. To Evan Lewis: when I first read your letter to me in *Melmoth* Seven, I was angry. Very. I think you were right, however, after reading it several times. Let me tell you why. I was a severely abused child. Both my sister and I were sexually, mentally and physically abused up until we were 16 and 17. I felt that I never had control of my situation. Even up until several weeks ago. I did feel that the rape was my fault—many times I brooded over the whole horrid night. My fault, my fault. But now I know otherwise.

My "relationship" with D'aal is odd because it's healthy. Again Evan, you're correct in saying that I didn't love him because he didn't abuse me. You're right you know, I'd never had a healthy relationship until now. I had no idea what one was. So now, I know and I'm learning that it's okay to open my heart to another person. But, it'll take time. It's very hard after years of self-defense. My armour is very thick. I'm seeing a psychiatrist now—once a week, sometimes twice for four hours a session. It's going to take a while to undo all the damage. It's starting to help—slowly. But thank you, Evan for your words.

After reading my letter in *Melmoth* Seven, I realized that it sounded really

unfair to the liberal minded men. I apologize to anyone I offended. It's just that when you get right down to it, the abortion is up to the woman because it is her body, but they (the pro-choice gents) can march in rallies and protest! Protest.

How about this gag order that just came up this past month or so? And President Bush has admitted to being Pro-life! We're going to hell in a handbasket folks! It's going to be a bumpy ride!

I'm going to be going to school in the fall and I'm finally in a home for a definite period of time—a year at least. Thank God! I'm up in Tahoe and surrounded by trees! Yeah! Still have the same P.O. Box in Livermore. You can write me there. Oh, the hand-fasting has been postponed—no money. So no need for an excuse, just wait until next season. You are still invited Dave!

I've also joined up with a wonderful group of folks—all pagan and the support has been amazing! It's made such a difference for me. But one of the greatest people that have been helping me is Simon R. Green. A blessing with two legs. He's also an author and has been through a rough life as well. He's an inspiration for me, about both life and writing. It's been one of my passions and I have great respect for those who have made their mark.

I don't know if she reads *Cerebus*, but I must thank Wendy Pini for her postcard. It was so thrilling to hear from the heart behind *Elfquest*. Thank you for your gentle words Wendy, they help soothe my bristled coat. I snarl less too.

Enjoying Dead Can Dance's "Black Sun". It has a deeply intense, pulsating throb to it that I find most satisfying to dance to. I've been working out on the weights again! Yeah! I have to start over in some ways, for every month or more you miss in weight lifting the lower weight amount you start with. Again. But I hope to do better than before.

It's nice to see Cerebus snap out of his stupor. I know the feeling to come clear of the clouds. D'aal is wearing his Cerebus shirt (the one about how he wants all your money—he's had it six to seven years). It's looking a wee bit faded. Any way I can get a hold of a new one? He's also mending his B.D.U.'s—has jolly joe this weekend (army reserve). Only four more months and then he's finally out after eight years.

Oh, by the way, please print my phone number. If people don't want to write they can call me. I'd be more than happy to talk to anyone who feels that they have something important or weird to say. Just don't call during the hours of prime time 'cause that's when the rates are highest—save yourself a dime. Besides, I'm usually gone or asleep by then. Okay? Hope to hear

from someone!

I don't have a new P.O. yet. I'll have the Livermore one until next March. All can write to me there.

Please drop me a line sometime Dave, no pressure though. I know you're very busy. Say hi sometime. You're something else!

My best as always to you and the gang. A great bunch of people. Be good to yourselves!

Take care & blessed be,

The Ranger
P.O. Box 2471
Livermore, CA
USE 94551-2471
(916) 546-2926

No calls between 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. please!

P.S. Ron! Call me! I've lost your address and have a letter waiting!

★★★★★★★★

Really concluding the "Ben Samuels Poetry Series" and this time I mean it;

Talk

She talked about the books that she hadn't read and he pretended he knew what she was talking about.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

You've printed a letter from a near-rapist. How about one from a rape victim?

First off, I'm a male, for what that's worth. Not that that should matter, really, but it does, to many people. "What could a man know about rape?" Well, ladies, you'd be surprised, sometimes.

You see, when I was in fifth grade, in my sleepy little suburban home town, I was riding my bike along the street near our town pond late on Sunday afternoon when a man grabbed me, dragged me into the bushes along the pond's edge, and raped me. He was probably in his thirties; he hadn't shaved, and his breath stank. He was slightly overweight, but he was (or seemed to be) very strong. I fought, but he kept hitting me, and eventually it hurt less to just stop struggling. It was over in about a minute. I never saw him go away. I was too busy crying. Eventually I cleaned myself up, went home, told Mom I'd been beaten up by the local bullies, and went up to my room. As far as I know, my parents haven't a clue what happened to me.

Sounds simple? The pain of a moment or two, and then it's over? Well, it's not that simple. You see, the aftermath of rape—its effect on the victim—isn't nearly so simple as the act itself. I've had to live with the memory for many

years now. My self-image has been lousy ever since—I somehow came to believe that I'd deserved what was done to me. I'm still trying to stop loathing myself. I've succeeded at that, more or less, but it's been a long, tiresome effort. I'm fully functioning sexually, which is rare for rape victims. But I still have nightmares about it. At stressful times in my life, I always have the same nightmare—a dream based on the rape.

So. Why am I writing this? Well, I could go on about what that rapist did to me, but it wouldn't serve any real purpose. Anybody with any empathy should understand what was done to me. I'm writing this to tell M'Oak, and the other men out there who've thought about rape, about what it does to a person. You see, M'Oak, I'm glad you didn't rape "Deborah." But your letter doesn't indicate that you have much knowledge, real, empathic, or intuitive, about what it would have done to her. Rape isn't something the victim can walk away from. The rapist, well, after he comes, he can zip up, walk away, go to bed, and sleep a good night's sleep. It's not like that for us. Some of us get compulsive about keeping clean, scrubbing our hands for minutes on end, or taking hour-long showers, or brushing our teeth every night until our gums bleed. We also get paranoid, in a very clinical sense; walking alone late at night makes us nervous, making sure our doors and windows are locked becomes almost an obsession (me, I wake up on average once a night and go downstairs to check to see that the doors and windows are locked. No matter that I keep a knife by my bed, and that the rapist who tries me now is gonna be very sorry; in the night, I'm still ten years old, and small, and weak). Nearly all of us suffer from feelings of worthlessness; knowing that what happened wasn't your fault doesn't matter. You can't intellectualize away feelings.

I'm not writing for sympathy. I'm past that now. I'm about as healthy, mentally, as I'm ever going to be. For most rape victims, there comes a time, months, years, or even decades after the rape, when you have to say, "Okay, I was raped. I can live with that, and move on." It's not easy, god knows, but it's the only recourse to suicide. I'm writing, M'Oak, because of your statement that "what a rape victim might feel is nothing compared to what is felt when looking the real demon in the face. Nowhere near it." My initial reaction to that was rage, but that passed. What I'm left with is something different. I'm angry, yes, but I want you to understand why. I want to try and let you see why you're wrong. You see, you really can't understand what rape is like unless you've been there. You can intellectually project yourself, but your emotions are safe; they

aren't damaged the way a rape victim's are: Rape is shattering. It's something you have to live with every day of your life. Just like knowing that the demon is inside of you—that you're a potential rapist. You, M'Oak, the near-rapist, have to live with the knowledge of what you might do, what you almost did, what you're capable of doing. I'd imagine that you worry about keeping yourself in control—that you judge yourself a bit harshly because of what you could do, if you let your guard slip. That's not an easy thing to live with, I know (as an aside: I have the same problem with my anger. I was frighteningly close once to using my tire iron on a loud, obnoxious asshole, simply because he was a loud, obnoxious asshole. Not because he'd done anything to deserve it, only because he'd yelled sexist slurs at a friend. If I lose control, I won't rape someone, I'll hurt them in other ways). I can understand the knowledge that, inside you, there is something that you detest. And I respect your strength in writing about it.

But, M'Oak, we rape victims have to live with a terrible knowledge, too. We have to live with the knowledge, and memory, of what was done to us, of what really happened, rather than what might have happened. The fact that we didn't do anything, but had something done to us—that we weren't active, that we were the victims—doesn't ease that knowledge. Yes, we're all adults, and we should be able to differentiate between being a potential victimizer and a very real victim. But some things are so awful that they strip away our image of ourselves as adults and bring us back to childhood, and helplessness. In threatening situations my very first reaction is utter fear; an inner voice always screams, "please, not again." Then the rage comes, and I become a dangerous person to be around. But that's because I'm a decent-sized male. What about those women who are smaller and weaker than I am, or you are? How do they live with it? I don't know.

I'm trying, really trying, to get a point across to you, M'Oak, without being insulting or condescending. The fact is, though, knowing what you're capable of isn't as bad as remembering what actually was done to you. To say that it is, that your potential, your bad side, is more frightening than horrible memories (which, in most cases, don't fade quickly, if at all) smacks to me of an SS concentration camp guard saying that what the inmates had to go through wasn't nearly as bad as what he has to go through, remembering what he did. You didn't do anything. You almost did. But your self-control won out. And it should, again. You're an adult. You control your body and your hormones.

If the reverse is true, then you aren't an adult. Simple as that.

Am I not cutting horny men enough slack? Lord knows I can understand being horny. I am myself. But there's always masturbation. M'Oak, and all the rest of you out there, you've got to remember what rape is going to do to the victim, and ask yourself one question: is the momentary gratification you're going to receive worth the weeks, months, and years of anguish, self-loathing, and depression that the victim is going to have to suffer through. If you decide it is, then what you've done is reduce the victim's status—he or she isn't a human being anymore, but merely a receptacle for your desires. And that's an evil attitude. I can understand how you came to feel that way, but it's still evil.

Sorry for going on at such length, Dave, but I felt it had to be said. If you do print this, please don't use my name. I can write about this, but facing my friends with it, some of whom read *Cerebus*, is more than I'm ready to deal with right now.

Anonymous
Washington, DC

★★★★★★★★★

Forgot to leave space this issue for the *Cerebus* Preview introduction page. Fortunately, Linda left just enough space at the end of the letter column for me to mention that it's our old buddy Ivan Brunetti of "Misery Loves Comedy" fame. His Paisano Publishing Co. will be publishing *Biff Bang Pow!* 1 in November (I still like the original title *Teenage Lesbian Enema Nurses Journal* but what are you going to do?). It features Fine Art Force (Impressionist Girl! Captain Cubist! Matisse Cut-Out Man!), Lone Wolf and Bob, Hitler's Sunday Comix, Dancin' by Jessica Abel and the nutty (and hey I really mean that) ten pages you're about to read (you lucky lucky people). \$2.95 USA, \$3.50 in Canada. Throw in a buck or so for postage and order from Paisano Publishing, 5214 S. Woodlawn Ave., Apt. 209, Chicago, Illinois, 60615.



Matisse Cut-Out Man
by Thad Doria

A LURID TALE OF ACADEMIA
GONE BAD!

The Post-Modernist *always* Rings Twice

by Ivan Brunetti

STARRING
Professor
Dirk Trotsky

HARD-BOILED
INTELLECTUAL



a PSEUDO-INTELLECTUAL

PULP FILM
NOIR

SHORT STORY

COLL

GRAPHIC

93

PASTICHE

JUST LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY:
"One of the true masterworks of the genre!"
-Them



Thirty-six seconds ago I shot
a sadistic killer in the head.

His lifeless mass now lay
bleeding profusely onto my
office floor.

And I recently mopped, too.

Summer.

...And to think it was only this
afternoon that Candida Schwarzschild,
the History Department's primo babe,
nervously entered my office, looking
helpless, confused, and
dangerously sexy.

I offered her an unfiltered stick of carcinogenic agents.

THE POLICE
SUSPECT ME OF
COMMITTING THOSE
FOUR CAMPUS
MURDERS.

So far, this had all the earmarks of a typical detective story set-up. But with a bod
like hers, you don't nitpick on stylistic cliches, know what I mean? Let me tell ya about
Candida Schwarzschild. Grad student. Working on a dissertation entitled "Theory of
Medieval Religious Philosophy and Cheese-Licking." The cops found a copy of Thomas
Aquinas' Summa Theologica and a few pieces of runny brie near the scene of two of the
murders, and all of a sudden, she's candidate for Cutest Tush in the State Pen.

I'M
INNOCENT.
DIRK! I'M
BEING
FRAMED!

SOMEONE'S OUT TO SCREW ME OVER!
I DIDN'T MURDER THOSE PROFESSORS!

YEHYEHYEH
SO WHAT'S
YOUR POINT?

I'LL GIVE YOU
HALF MY GRANT MONEY
IF YOU CAN PROVE TO THE
COP'S THAT I'M
INNOCENT!

Now, I just happened to be working on the final chapter of my latest brilliant masterwork, *The Stratified Hierarchy of Meaningful Symbols in Ancient Icelandic Limericks*, to be published by the University press next May--look for it at your local bookstores. But when there's moolah to be garnered, hey, the hell with all that academic gobbledy-gook.

THROW IN A FREE
CASE OF BLACK LABEL AND A
NEW HIGHLIGHTER PEN AND YOU'VE
GOT A DEAL, SUGAR!

SOUNDS
NIFTY.

C'MON, LET'S BLOW
THIS POPSICLE STAND.
WE'LL GO TO HEIDEGGER'S
BAR 'N' GRILL AND SUCK DOWN
A COUPLE BREWSKIES.

OK, BUT LET ME LEAVE A MESSAGE WITH MY SECRETARY
TO CANCEL MY AFTERNOON CLASS. GOD, I HATE TEACHING
A COURSE CALLED *COPROPHILIA IN THE ARTS* ANYWAY...

YEAH, SEE, RIGHT HERE. PAGE 3.

SO THEN WHAT YOU'RE
BASICALLY CLAIMING IS THAT
ST. AUGUSTINE WAS ARGUING THAT
MAN CANNOT DERIVE A MORAL
LAW FROM A HIGHER BEING...

EXACTLY...WE MUST
DERIVE MORAL SYSTEMS
DIRECTLY FROM OUR OWN
EXISTENCE...

SO YOU WANT
TO SLEEP WITH ME
OR WHAT?

OH, JESUS, DIRK,
I DON'T KNOW...
IS THAT PART OF
THE SCRIPT?

"CANDIDA HAS A
NIGHT OF TORRID,
VIOLENT, AROMATIC
SWEATY LOVEMAKIN
WITH THE
STUDLY DIRK."

THIS GENRE IS
SO INHERENTLY
SEXIST,
Y'KNOW?

WELL, YOU CAN
JUST FORGET IT, DIRK.
I DON'T CARE IF IT
IS THE AESTHETICALLY
CORRECT THING TO DO.
I AM NOT GOING
TO BED--

DAMN. IT'S SO
LIMITING BEING
FICTIONAL.

I DUNNO...
I RATHER ENJOY
IT MYSELF...

FFFIID
LISTEN, DIRK, I GOTTA
GET GOING. THE LIBRARY IS
CLOSING SOON, AND I REALLY
NEED TO GET SOME
RESEARCH DONE.

I'M VERY CLOSE
TO FORMULATING A
CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM OF
DUALITY INVOLVING THE
MEDIEVAL PAPACY AND
SHREDDED PARMESAN.

AND GET THE
CASE SOLVED.
WOULD YA?

--WITH YOU.



Typical skirt...



DIRK! IT'S LORENZO! Lissen, I'M SCARED FECESS-LESS! I NEED YOUR HELP!

I was expecting a dramatic plot twist at this particular juncture in the plot, but it was only Lorenzo Bjorkstrom, the senile, foul-smelling, gin-soaked, bloated whore that also happened to be chairman of the Humanities Dept. I drove over to his apartment on 53rd and Kimbark...

I THINK I'M GONNA BE NEXT, DIRK! THE NEXT VICTIM OF THAT DERANGED PSYCHO! HE'S AFTER ME!

JEEZ, LORENZO, CHEW ON SOME THIOURAZINE AND CHILL!

NO, I'M SERIOUS, DIRK! I THINK THE UNIVERSITY'S AFTER ME! THEY WANNA RUB ME OUT! I JUST GOT A DEATH THREAT OVER THE PHONE!

AW, FER CHIRISSAKES, LORENZO... YOU'RE TENURED!



THAT'S WHY THEY GOTTA BUMP ME OFF...IT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO GET ME OUTTA THEIR HAIR! DIRK, THIS KILLER'S CONTEMPT FOR HUMANITY BORDERS ON THE NIETZSCHEAN.

GASUNDHEIT, LOOK, LORENZO... JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE AN AGING, ORESE LUSH WITH A FEEBLE GRASP ON REALITY, DOESN'T MEAN THAT THE UNIVERSITY WANTS TO GET RID OF YOU.

I MEAN, HIRING A KILLER IS NOT EXACTLY A GOOD BR.MOVE.

IT'S ALL ACADEMIC OFFICE POLITICS. THEY WANT TO GET RID OF US TENURED GUYS SO THEY CAN BRING IN SOME POST-DOCS TO TEACH AND PAY THEM A BELLUVA LOT LESS!

IT'S A PLOT, I TELL YA.

Well, for the first time in years Lorenzo was almost making sense. A few more weeks' worth of shock treatments and he might someday begin approaching coherence. Sure, he sounded like yet another drooling crackpot spewing an inane paranoid theory, but maybe he was onto something.



This case was starting to sizzle hotter than Dante's Inferno. I organized all the information I had on the murders. I toyed with the idea that the killings could have been politically motivated, with the cops covering it up. Hey, you never know... in this city, an honest cop is harder to find than a hydra-headed Elvis baby.



Ovid Augustus Shackelfitt
Asst. Professor in the Linguistics Dept.
Had been working toward the development of a new theory of diphthongs. His body was found ~~sma~~ splattered on the sidewalk in front of the building in which his office is located. Apparently, he committed suicide by plunging out of his window. However, we have found a copy of "Ulysses" in his office, with a bookmark on the last chapter. In addition, several professors in neighboring offices claim they heard "about thirty minutes of intense screaming and loud thud-like noises." Thus, foul play has not been ruled out, I mean, who would start reading "Ulysses" and kill himself before he reached the end?



F. Gregory Kularudd
Professor, Physics Dept.
Noted for his influential theories of neutrino transfer and group bestiality. Found last Tuesday ~~saxhiama~~ dismembered in his apartment, the alley, the front lawn, the hallway, the sidewalk, his refrigerator, in the trunk of an abandoned El Camino on 56th and Woodlawn, and underneath second base in Wrigley Field.



Deborah Q. Glothdexter
Assoc. Professor/English Lit.
Chairperson of Wymmin's Studies Dept.
Author of two books: "Penis Envy Depends on the Particular Penis," and "Castrate all the Bastards". Found dead, with cigar burns covering her entire body. Her ghostly nude body, acned with eared flesh, glistened sickly in the pale light of her dank office, a nightmarish ~~-----~~ wosh, sorry. Got poetic for a cond there.



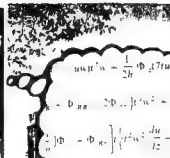
Professor Hiroshi "Skip" Juskiewicz
Internationally acclaimed mathematician, logician, odd frequence male exotic dancer. Associates claim "he had the legs for it..." He was found dead in his home on Wednesday, brutally hacked to death. He was stabbed with a large sharp object at least 276 times. A suicide note was found near his body, but handwriting experts believe it is a fake, especially since it was written in purple crayon and the word "Juskiewicz" was misspelled.



I didn't get it... there seemed to be no mode of rational thought behind the killings. I couldn't formulate a logical connection among the chosen victims. Bjorkstrom's theory didn't hold up... only two of the four professors were tenured. And none of the professors had taken controversial political stands--although for 48 hours one of them once had refused to look at nude pictures of Pat Nixon. I was thoroughly perplexed by this mother of a case...



So I walked. And I thought. Hard.



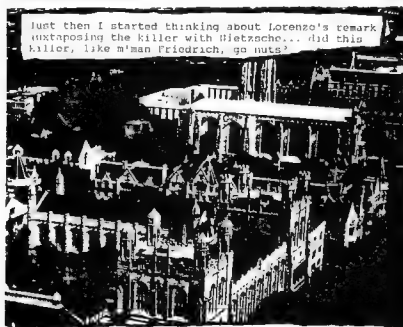
Hmmm...what would Descartes do at a time like this...or Newton, for that matter? Deductive reasoning and inductive empirical study were getting me nowhere. My mind seemed only to spiral toward the nadir of a Sartre-esque nothingness...

or was it a stiff bourbon?

I forget.



The answer to my dilemma eluded me like the plot of a Chekhov play.

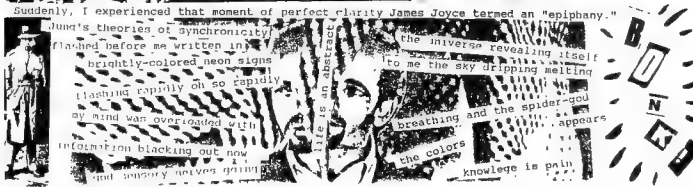


Just then I started thinking about Lorenzo's remark juxtaposing the killer with Nietzsche... did this killer, like M'man Friedrich, go nuts?

Could he be some psychotic student who read too much Dostoevski and Kafka and all those other manic depressive dudes? Was he some misguided, pseudo-intellectual, fashionably pessimistic young punk?



YOUNG...HMMM JUNG...CARL JUNG... THAT'S THE ANSWER!





Luckily I walked into a parking meter and smashed my nose. Although I bled uncontrollably for the next five minutes, my mind was once again firmly implanted on planet Earth.

Anyway, back to Jung and synchronicity...perhaps the murders were indeed connected in some mystical way... though not in a conventional, linear sense.

I broke into the Administration Building to look up a few records.

I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS KINDA CRAP.

OOOH MY LUMBAGO'S ACTIN' UP ON ME AGAIN!

SOMETIMES I WONDER HOW OR WHY I EVER GOT INTO 'THE TEACHIN' RACKET!

I found the files I needed.

I called Candida and told her to meet me at my office.



BINGO!

YEAH, AND COULD YOU BRING THAT CUTE LITTLE LACE TEDDY I LIKE SO MUCH?

PLUS SOME MAZOLA AND OAT THINS.

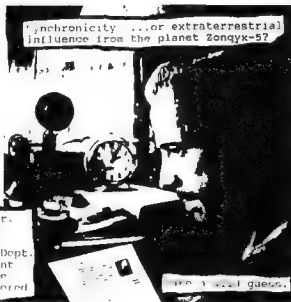


On the way home I had the nagging feeling that someone was following me...

Synchronicity ...or extraterrestrial influence from the planet Zonqyx-5?



Pierre Hwang-Dong is an English major. His thesis on the Aesthetic Criteria of Post-Modern Film Criticism was recently rejected by the Humanities Dept. He also happens to be the only student to have been enrolled in at least one class taught by each one of the murdered people.



OH
GOOD LORD!
WHO-WHAT THE
HELL ARE
YOU?

YER WORST
NIGHTMARE,
PUNK!

I AM DEATH
AND I GRANT NO
REPRIEVES!

HELLO, I-
MUST BE
GOING

He was a hodge-podge of Ingmar
Bergman and the Marx Brothers,
an ungodly post-modern combo
platter if ever there was one.

He was bathed in the eerie,
ethereal chiaroscuro of the
decadent urban moonlight.
He looked kinda cool,
actually. OK, I admit it,
his mustache turned me on.
I asked him to carry my unborn
fetus--hey, just kidding...
Ahem, back to the story.

YOUR MOUTH
WILL BE TWISTED
INTO THE LAST
UNFINISHED GASP
BEFORE
NIGHTFALL..

He seemed to symbolize the
cruel joke we call life.

I SHOT AN
ELEPHANT IN MY
PAJAMAS--HOW HE GOT
IN MY PAJAMAS I'LL
NEVER KNOW

THE MORNING
BREEZE SHALL LIE
DOWN! THE RESTLESS
MOVEMENT OF THE SEA
SHALL CEASE.

THE WATER IS SILENT
THE SEA GULL FLOATS
UNDER THE DARK CLOUD.
FROZEN IN SPACE.

YOU WILL PALE
AND BECOME
EXTINGUISHED BEFORE
MORNING DAWNS.

WELL, I
THOUGHT MY RAZOR
WAS DULL UNTIL I
HEARD THIS
SPEECH.

THEY MOCKED
ME AND MY THEORIES
OF FILM, BUT I
SHOWED THEM!

HAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHA

I JUST
WASTED
YOUR FRIEND
LORENZO!

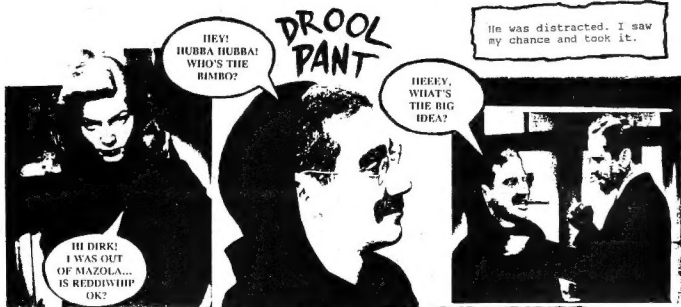
It was Pierre. He was deranged.
Too many art houses, revival
theatres, pretentious film
courses, and smug French film
magazines had obviously
taken their toll.

LIFE IS AN
OUTRAGEOUS HORROR.
NO ONE CAN LIVE IN
THE FACE OF DEATH,
KNOWING THAT
ALL IS
NOTHINGNESS

I DIDN'T
APPRECIATE
HIS PHILISTINE
COMMENTARY!
MY B.A.
PAPER!

YOU'RE
NEXT,
DIRK!

He had a scythe, and he didn't
look afraid to use it...



I reached for my forty-five as he ranted and raved.

I tried to reason with the punk...

REALITY BECKONS, PIERRE! YOU'RE DUE BACK ON THE SPACE-TIME CONTINUUM!

But the Socratic method obviously didn't mean jack to this fozzo.

I DON'T CARE IF IT IS A HOBBISSIAN UNIVERSE, PIERRE! EVEN SPINOZA WOULD FROWN UPON THIS!

*Notice the film's legendary technical flaw: Trotsky's stand-in for this scene has forgotten to remove his hat!

YOU SHALL ALL DIE TODAY TOMORROW OR THE NEXT DAY BECAUSE ALL OF YOU HAVE BEEN SENTENCED---OOOOF!!

WELL, YOU CAN CUT OUT THE NEO-RATIONALIST MALARKIE, TROTSKY! YOU'RE DEAD!

It all happened so fast--it was reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's jumpy editing techniques.

Or maybe even Alain Resnais. But I digress.

KA-BLAM!

And I shot him. I shot him dead.

MY CROWN GLEAMS IN THE SUN! MY SCYTHE FLASHES AND I RAISE IT ABOVE YOUR HEAD, AND I WILL STRIKE.

I wanted to reflect on the moral implications of my actions... but a shot of whiskey sounded better...



MY GOD!
DIRK...

Candida was visibly shaken up...



THIS VIOLATES
THE BASIC TENETS OF
EVERY MORAL PHILOSOPHY
EVER DEVELOPED BY
HUMANKIND

INCLUDING
KANT'S
CATEGORICAL
IMPERATIVE

Poor kid was so distressed we had to postpone
oral sex for another fifteen minutes.



BABY, THE
BIG HAIRY KANT
AIN'T GONNA MEAN
SQUAT TO THE
COPPER.

The police arrived shortly. After the whole sordid ordeal ended, Candida and I went back to my apartment to continue our rational discourse--and, of course, engage in a little hanky panky as well. She was the kinda dame that needed only a little philosophical interplay to fuel the raging fire-storm of her libido.

She tied me up. I liked that. I enjoy a hint of De Sade with my Kant.

Well, it may all sound incredibly silly to you, and perhaps it is. But hey, when's the last time an 18th century German philosopher helped get you laid?



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